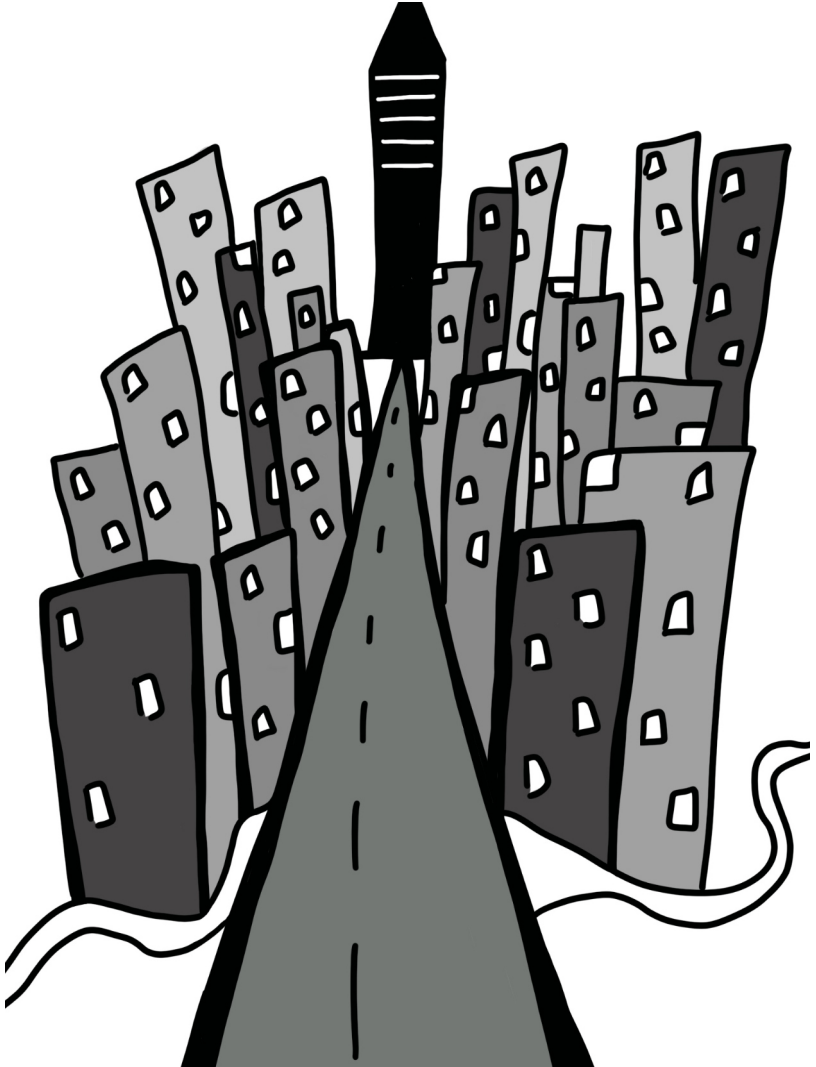


information boulevard



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# ENTRANCE POINT



You can think of her as a character if you like, but the important thing to see first is the road. The boulevard.

It's perfect, flat, no cracks or potholes, because it has near-constant upkeep. There must be an attempt to make the people feel like everything's taken care of. The road runs straight across the island, a paved sidewalk goes parallel and expands into a tangle of other pathways, but the road itself is just a line. A line until it reaches the edge of the land, where it shifts into the ramp onto the bridge.

The bridge, to the west of the boulevard, is the route off the island. Rarely taken but always present, blue in the atmosphere, at a safe distance. Visible on the road and from almost every window in almost every building on the boulevard. The people on the boulevard find the strangest days of their existence are when it's foggy in the morning in the summer and the bridge is hidden behind the air. *This is what it would be like if the bridge did not exist*, they'd think, almost as a collective, and somehow it seemed that the boulevard ought not to not-exist and that they ought not to exist when that anchor, the bridge, was gone.



For narration's sake it is the most interesting for her (if you consider her a character) to arrive on the island on a day like this, in the morning, in the summer, when the bridge can't be seen from the boulevard. The van is driven by a close confidant who knows the mission and knows that there isn't another time for this transport to occur without much more heightened risk. There's something to say about a symbol or a metaphor (fog is hiding her from the boulevard and also the boulevard from her), some way of answering that typical question "Why does it start here?"

This is an entrance point.

# meaning of the word

Information is all. Right? The word is used to express something specifically unspecific. The word implies sets of problems (authority problems, accuracy problems, saliency problems). But information also means everything; all knowledge of the universe or a selection of data for a teaspoon of soil. Information can be defined at the broadest and most granular level.

Then there's another problem, the big problem with information—the dis- and mis- and anti-. Specifically unspecific information is a liability, and its own kind of apocalypse, occurring alongside the other apocalypi. It did not seem possible to have information without contamination.

She—our character—wanted it pure. Or that's what she thought she wanted.

If information could become a place (no one would have accepted "state") then maybe in this place the soil could be made good for growing knowledge. Then information could be dispensed, as from a cloud, simple and objective as rain, and the people could decide if the rain was a nuisance or a cleanser or a precursor to



destruction. The rain would be impartial and essential, loyal only to itself. That was the idea, at least.

All these nature allusions and all the talking about water made the island inevitable. Once something is written there's already an association linked, an inevitable image created. Inevitability in the construction of a bridge, inevitability in the pavement of a long stretch of road. The boulevard.

# mission Statement

If there was a banner (or a flag, or a billboard) to tell us the purpose of Information Boulevard, it would have to be in three parts:

EDUCATION

Entertainment


ENTERPRISE

# EDUCATION

Practically everyone can agree that people must be learning. There are thirty-three towers dedicated to Education on Information Boulevard. 1 through 3 Information Boulevard are residence buildings for students. The towers are organized by age; two to ten in the first, eleven to eighteen in the second, eighteen to twenty-two in the third. The younger children are the children of the workers on the boulevard. Because they've grown up here, they must stay; they couldn't possibly understand the mainland. From eighteen on, students on the outside must send their applications, revoke their lives on the mainland for the chance to do the necessary work. It will be their jobs to create and disseminate information.

4 through 34 Information Boulevard are sites for the administration of educational material. Call it "text books," call it "courseware," call it "public knowledge": it's all made there. The most popular export to the mainland is a bundle called *Essentials for Everyone*, a curriculum package that contains seventy-five video lessons, class activity generators, accompanying quizzes, and






sample lesson plans. *Essentials for Everyone* promises a complete education—covering topics as diverse as basic arithmetic and global history—with content adaptable to every age range and applicable to every classroom. The curriculum simply provides exactly what people need to know, curated by professionals. The package is highly reviewed and comes at an exceedingly reasonable cost.

# Entertainment

What is life without amusement? This is not lost on the workers of Information Boulevard. Amusement is quite serious as a product and a pastime. It's amazing, actually—a mechanism for feeling without having to move.

35 through 56 Information Boulevard are the nexi of entertainment. Every beloved artifact on the mainland is conceptualized and produced inside these twenty-one towers.

But the workers on the boulevard only watch one show. It's called *The Adventures of Faneer and Tosalis*, a combination epic adventure-fantasy series/contest reality show. In each season, viewers vote for which people should portray which characters, and then the plots unfurl for approximately eight weeks per story. At critical junctures, viewers vote for what happens next. The workers on Information Boulevard can busy themselves with all kinds of extra side material connected to the show, some created by the official team (which is located in a separate tower from the production teams on mainland projects; can't have spoilers) and some created by viewers themselves. There's always something to



do. If you don't like the way the story went this season, you can write the fanfiction, and you'll have plenty of support.

Some say the production of *The Adventures of Faneer and Tosalis* is housed at 101 Information Boulevard. It's just a rumor, but... where else could it be done?

# ENTERPRISE

Information Boulevard is not a state—no one would have accepted “state.” It’s safely pro-business on the island. The Enterprise towers, 57 through 99 Information Boulevard, are the most important towers by far (according to almost everyone you ask). None of this is possible without the businesses, the fundraisers, the investment groups, the start-ups, the lobbyists, the legal teams. No wonder the island needs forty-two towers to hold all this prodigious enterprise. But the business of it is really no one’s business except for the person at the top of the tower at the northernmost end of the boulevard. The final tower. That’s what she suspects anyway, our character (if you consider her a character). As she arrives in the van in the fog, she is searching the hidden skyline for the apex of the tower where one day, many days from now, if all goes according to plan, she will ascend. She suspects the answers to her questions are there: at the top of 101 Information Boulevard.



It should go without saying that these are very desirable jobs. You can really make a difference! This is why so many young people are drawn to the boulevard from the mainland. Those who are chosen bond easily over their shared dodging-of-the-bullet: there is simply nothing meaningful to do on the mainland. Nothing that *reaches* people, nothing that *touches* people. Lucky for them they are all here, on the boulevard, doing the work that really matters—the creation, curation, and distribution of information. The view of the bridge reminds them of how far they’ve come.

A swath of supervisors exists for the sole purpose of onboarding the rolling influx of young workers and students. The kids never seem to fully grasp that they are just one more group of endless groups that have attended this orientation and taken their place in one of these towers. Our character is reflecting on this as she sits through her own orientation, waiting for her assignment. Why do they always think that the boulevard was waiting for *them*?

# nfiltration

If you think of her as a character, you might imagine that from the age of fourteen she had prepared herself for this moment. You might imagine a thousand unarticulated choices and movements that led her here; they might look suspiciously like your own movements, the ones you took to get wherever you are. We can't help but apply our emotions to characters. That's kind of the point. You already have the sense that she is an underdog, which makes you want to see her win.

You may already have the sense that she is in danger—which she is.

# data gathering#@

Her assignment is in 24 Information Boulevard. She'd been hoping for something in the 60s or 70s, as close to 101 as possible, but it does not come as a surprise. Her falsified credentials couldn't have qualified her for Enterprise without raising eyebrows. She has been placed on an Education team that produces public service announcements. Don't drink, don't smoke, eat less sugar, get at least twenty minutes of cardio a day. Preemptive I-told-you-so's. These videos make her angry, because they imply a series of correct choices, a way of avoiding failure. This is a lie. Everybody dies. That's why she's here.

She talks to her coworkers. She observes where people go, what they look at, what they don't look at. She writes her notes by hand. It's the only way to log thoughts that can be destroyed if needed, and any other kind of transmission could be intercepted by the island's surveillance network. She keeps the notebook hidden on her body, even when she sleeps.



She learns that 100 Information Boulevard is empty; a buffer zone around 101. She did not know this before and it will alter her plans: in one way for the better, in one way for the worse.



# pursuit of answers

What is she looking for? It would not be quite fair to say “confirmation of her biases.” Though in some ways it’s true: if you are preparing for a task most of your life, you will have been trained to anticipate and respond to things that are likely to happen. Her experience of Information Boulevard is, must be, a massive prejudgment. You’re satisfied with her prejudgment (in spite of a general disapproval of prejudice) because she is... what? The good guy?

Our character and her associates have done their research, jumped tedious and sometimes threatening hoops to compile the knowledge that grounds their position (which is some kind of anti-, as you’ve no doubt realized). They have learned that there is a glass terrace at the apex of tower 101, and above that another sealed office, accessible only by helicopter. Her mission: who is in that office?

If she asks her coworkers who the governor of Information Boulevard is, they will say, *There is no governor. It is not a state.* If she asks her coworkers who the CEO is, they will say, *It is not a company. It is a street.*

# dreaming of the boulevard

The boulevard gets in your head. It's not unusual to hear a worker say they have dreamt of it. *What are you doing in the dream?* a colleague might ask, congenially, over lunch. *Nothing*, says the dreamer, a little bewildered. *Just looking up the road.*

Standing in front of 1 Information Boulevard, looking north, up the straight line. Towers rise on either side—a little cavernous from the ground—buildings all made of glass, but still opaque. Opaque, except you can see lights flashing on and off in grids, lights made square by windows. The buildings seem to topple together, vying for their view of the bridge to the west. The people on the boulevard easily lay claim to every tower (my towers, my boulevard), but they will never see them all. Only in dreams.

(She too dreams of the boulevard. Square lights and tilting buildings. But in hers the buildings tilt north, all buildings face 101. It gets in her head. In her dreams she's running toward it, and there's a powerful feeling, like she could just leap—)

*I'm not even really there*, says the dreamer. *I'm just seeing it.*

*Well, you're really here now!* the colleague replies, congenially, and takes the last bite of a sandwich.

# the adventures of FANEER & TOSALIS

## Season 27: the THREE-PART FINALE EVENT

Our character will enact her plan on this night, knowing that everyone will be watching the finale of *The Adventures of Faneer and Tosalis* for three and a half hours.

It should be noted that this is another reason why people aspire to life on the boulevard. The sense of community—to watch the same show. On the mainland there's no continuity; everything is fractured. More than anything, in their lives and in their content, what the people want is continuity.

(It will also be the biggest complaint about the Season 27 finale. *Continuity*. Because they painted this season's Faneer as a sort of "bad" type, but her dark-past plot line never comes to a satisfying conclusion in the second half of the finale. There's no beats in her transformation. It's like they forgot they changed her. How could they forget? Unforgivable. It's a real shame because it was an



interesting direction for the Faneer character that had a lot of potential...)

Three and a half hours—maybe a little extra, as the workers on the boulevard spend time arguing about character development and not looking out their windows. Three and a half hours to reach the top.

# ASCENSION



Watch how easy it is to compel you to imagine her scaling the tower. What do you see? For example: what kind of shoes is she wearing? Does she grimace against the tension in the grappling hook? She's using everything she learned in her twenty-four-day infiltration, especially one piece of knowledge: the empty number 100 shielding 101 from the rest of the boulevard.

She'd altered her plan; in one way for the better, in one way for the worse. The better: she sent a small machine shaped like a spider (an autonomous robot? do you believe it?) climbing up the facade of the empty tower. Surely she would have been spotted climbing tower 101 if not for the distraction of the spider on tower 100.

But for the worse: she probably should have climbed tower 100 herself. Sure, it would have been hazardous to cross onto 101 with the grappling hook, but it would have given her a better chance. It would have... it should have...



In retrospect, it's always easier to say what would have worked. You may imagine her pulling her body over the wall of the terrace, falling on her knees and heaving for breath. But the important thing to see is the glass walls of the secret office, looming above her, cohering into a triangle; and the important thing to hear is the subtle sliding open of electric doors, of stealthy boots making their way down.

On some level they were expecting her. Did you really think she was the first to try?

# EXIT POINT

What happened next? The confidant who drove the van over the bridge on that foggy morning will cry when the news gets around. The mission was a failure.

But maybe not. Can you imagine, before it ended, that our character managed to bring the tower down with her? She heard the subtle doors (having been warned to expect them), she knew it was over, and she pressed her detonator.

She was not the first, and the others before her had done their parts. Placing unobtrusive explosives at the structurally weakest points, a few at a time, so that when the moment came, if nothing else, everyone would know that the tower was not indestructible.

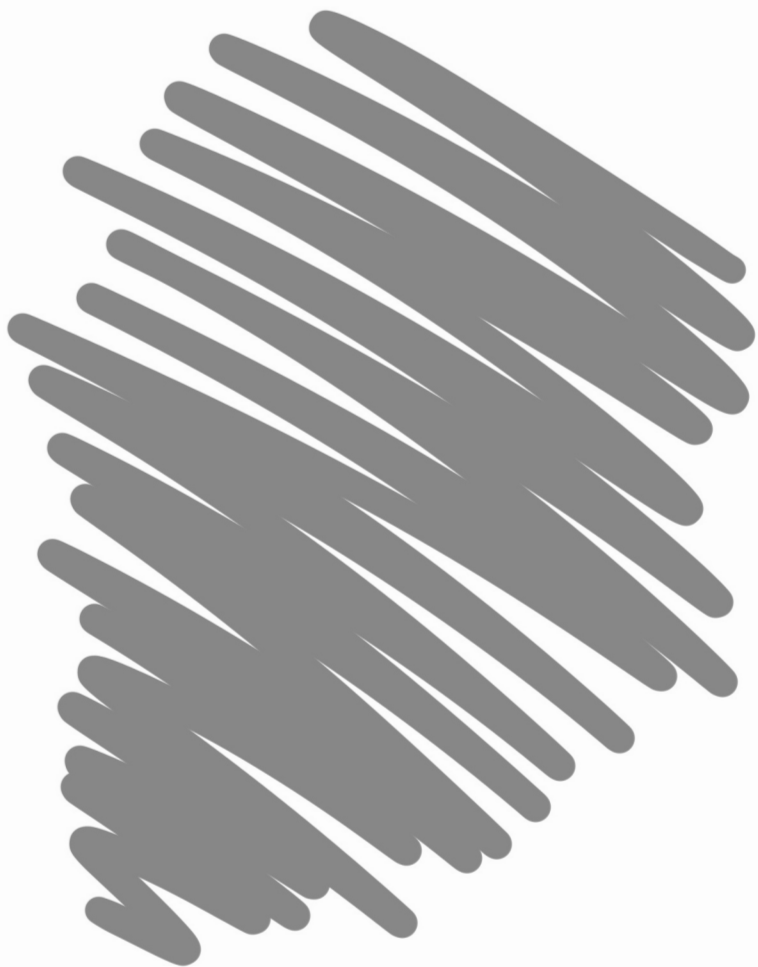
What does it mean to destroy something? What does it mean to be wrong? As it all came down, perhaps she wondered if she ever understood information. Who first told her the meaning of the word? Where had she learned about its cool, hopeful objectivity? She wanted it pure but so did everyone else; all wanting, wanting, wanting it pure. The nature metaphor was not a good one after all.



It's not like the soil. Maybe there was no person to confront in the triangle office at the top of 101 Information Boulevard, no one to demand answers from. The only true thing now was that the tower was crumbling. Maybe information and narration are just exercises in control.

This is an exit point.





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